



# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 107<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

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## *House of Representatives*

# VETERANS MUST REMAIN ONE OF OUR TOP PRIORITIES!

**HON. BOB FILNER**

**OF CALIFORNIA**

**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**MR. FILNER:** Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1291, the Veterans Education and Benefits Expansion Act of 2001. The bill includes much needed increases in benefits for our Nation's veterans, and I would like to comment on a couple of them.

First, I am very pleased that the provisions in my bill, H.R. 442, were substantively included in the larger bill. H.R. 1291 would increase from \$50,750 to \$60,000 the maximum amount of the home loan guaranty available to veterans and servicemembers under the Department of Veterans Affairs' home loan program. This increase is necessary to keep pace with the rising cost of housing, particularly in areas where the cost of housing is higher than in other parts of the country. This action is part of our duty to provide adequate funds for the vital programs that serve our Nation's veterans.

The amount of this guaranty has not increased since 1994. During the past seven years, the cost of housing has increased nationwide, and in some areas it has skyrocketed! Benefits for veterans must keep up with such increases if we are to keep our commitment to our veterans.

My bill, H.R. 442, would have provided a VA home loan guaranty increase to \$63,175 which would allow a maximum amount for a home loan of \$252,000. Although the amount of increase in H.R. 1291 is slightly less than in my bill, due to paygo requirements, I welcome this interim step which will allow the maximum amount for a home loan to rise to \$250,000.

Further increases are needed before this valuable program can regain its intended utility, and I fully intend to keep fighting for these increases in the future.

Likewise, I am supportive of the provision to restore educational assistance to participants in VA programs who are receiving benefits for classes that they are unable to complete because they have been called to duty to support the nation in times of global conflict.

And, while I am convinced we can and must do more, this bill will provide a sorely needed increase in the amount of educational benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB).

Veterans must remain one of our top priorities! I urge my colleagues to join me in support of H.R. 1291.